



## AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Without prejudice, please amend the claims as reflected in the following listing of claims, which will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

### Listing of Claims:

- 1 – 16. (Cancelled).
17. (Currently amended) ~~The apparatus of claim 14~~ An apparatus for tightening a cord, the apparatus comprising:
- a) a body; and
  - b) a grabber extending from the body and defining a groove therebetween configured to grip the cord therein;
- wherein the body and the grabber comprise an inner core material;  
and
- wherein the body and the grabber further comprise an outer coating.
18. (Original) The apparatus of claim 17 wherein the outer coating comprises a resiliently deformable material.
19. (Original) The apparatus of claim 18 wherein the resiliently deformable material comprises rubber.
20. (Original) The apparatus of claim 17 wherein the outer coating comprises a material selected to provide a desired amount of friction between the outer coating and the cord.
21. (Currently amended) ~~The apparatus of claim 1~~ An apparatus for tightening a cord, the apparatus comprising:
- a) a body; and

b) a grabber extending from the body and defining a groove therebetween configured to grip the cord therein; and

further comprising a plurality of teeth extending from at least one of the body and the grabber within the groove.

**22 – 39.** (Cancelled).

**40.** (Currently amended) ~~The method of claim 38~~ A method of tightening a cord, the method comprising:

gripping a cord in a groove defined between a grabber of a tightener and a body of the tightener; and

pulling the tightener;

wherein gripping a cord comprises gripping a lace portion extending between eyelets of a footwear item; and

wherein gripping comprises gripping a first lace portion in a first groove defined between a grabber of a first tightener and a body of the first tightener, and gripping a second lace portion in a second groove defined between a grabber of a second tightener and a body of the second tightener, and wherein pulling comprises pulling the first and second tighteners.

**41 – 42.** (Cancelled).